

Fitness Resources:

Food and Fitness

Food and Fitness is a monthly newsletter published online by food expert Kathrine Clark, the Bureau of Senior Services' statewide nutritionist. Articles range from "Mindless Eating" to "Lower Your Grocery Bill" to "The Emotional Side of Diabetes." A Recipe Corner with healthy and seasonal ideas is also included in each issue.

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Exercises To Improve Balance by Jane Macpherson

Falls are one of the leading causes of injury and death for senior citizens. However, you don't have to fall prey to slips and falls. By exercising, you can improve your balance and your strength, so you can stand tall and feel more confident when walking.

Exercise 1: Single Limb Stance

It's best to start off with a simple balance exercise for seniors. Here's how you do this one: stand behind a steady, solid chair and hold on to the back of it. Lift up your right foot and balance on your left foot. Hold that position for as long as you can, then switch feet. The goal should be to stand on one foot without holding onto the chair and hold that pose for up to a minute.



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[Exercise 2: Rock the Boat](#)

Stand with your feet apart, so that the space between them is the same width as your hips. Make sure both feet are pressed into the ground firmly. Stand straight, with your head level. Then, transfer your weight to your right foot and slowly lift your left leg off the ground. Hold that position for as long as possible (but no more than 30 seconds). Slowly put your foot back onto the ground, then transfer your weight to that foot. Slowly lift your opposite leg. Start by doing this exercise for balance five times per side, then work your way up to more repetitions.

[Exercise 3: Clock Reach](#)

You'll need a chair for this exercise. Imagine you are standing in the center of a clock. The number 12 is directly in front of you, and the number 6 is directly behind you. Hold the chair with your left hand. Lift your right leg, and extend your right arm so it's pointing to the number 12. Next, point your arm towards the number 3, and finally, point it behind you at the number 6. Bring your arm back to the number 3, and then to the number 12. Look straight ahead the whole time. Repeat this exercise twice per side.

[Exercise 4: Back Leg Raises](#)

This strength training exercise for seniors makes your bottom and lower back stronger. Stand behind a chair. Slowly lift your right leg straight back – don't bend your knees or point your toes. Hold that position for one second, then gently bring your leg back down. Repeat this 10 to 15 times per leg.

[Exercise 5: Wall Pushups](#)

As long as you've got a wall, you can do this strength training exercise for seniors. Stand an arm's length in front of a wall that doesn't have any paintings, decorations, windows or doors. Lean forward slightly and put your palms flat on the wall at the height and width of your shoulders. Keep your feet planted as you slowly bring your body towards the wall. Gently push yourself back so that your arms are straight. Do 20 of these.

[Exercise 6: Single Limb Stance with Arm](#)

This balance exercise for seniors improves your physical coordination. Stand with your feet together and arms at your side next to a chair. Lift your left hand over your head. Then, slowly raise your left foot off the floor. Hold that position for 10 seconds. Repeat the same action on the right side.

[Exercise 7: Side Leg Raise](#)

You'll need a chair for this exercise to improve balance. Stand behind the chair with your feet slightly apart. Slowly lift your right leg to the side. Keep your back straight, your toe facing forward, and stare straight ahead. Lower your right leg slowly. Repeat this exercise 10 to 15 times per leg.

[Exercise 8: Balancing Wand](#)

This balance exercise for seniors can be performed while seated. You'll need a cane or some kind of stick. Hold the bottom, so it's flat on the palm of your hand. The goal of this exercise is to keep the stick upright for as long as possible. Change hands so that you work on your balance skills on both sides of your body.

[Exercise 9: Marching in Place](#)

Marching is a great balance exercise for seniors. If you need to hold onto something, do this exercise in front of a counter. Standing straight, lift your right knee as high as you can. Lower it, then lift the left leg. Lift and lower your legs 20 times.

[Exercise 10: Toe Lifts](#)

This strength training exercise for seniors also improves balance. You'll need a chair or counter. Stand straight and put your arms in front of you. Raise yourself up on your toes as high as you can go, then gently lower yourself. Don't lean too far forward on the chair or counter. Lift and lower yourself 20 times.

Before embarking on an exercise regimen, please consult your doctor. Falls don't have to be a fact of life. Exercising can make you stronger and fitter. You don't need fancy equipment, either – just pull up a chair!